

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TRIEST 00158 171818Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 /058 W
-----180437Z 044298 /12
R 171500Z MAY 77
FM AMCONSUL TRIESTE
TO AMEMBASSY ROME
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0661

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIESTE 0158
E.O. 11652: GDS ----- TAGS : PINT, IT
SUBJ : ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE COMMUNISTS (PCI) IN THE
NORTHEAST SINCE JUNE 1975
REF : ROME 5784
1. SUMMARY. THE COMMUNISTS DESPITE GAINS IN JUNE 1975 HAVE NOT
DEVELOPED A CLEAR IMAGE IN THE NORTHEAST FOR THEMSELVES AS A VIABLE
ALTERNATIVE TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC). THE REASONS ARE TWO:
(A) THEY ARE WEAKER HERE THAN IN OTHER AREAS AND THE PCI MAJORITY
(USUALLY WITH THE SOCIALISTS), WHERE IT EXISTS, IS PAPER THIN AND
IS NO REAL MANDATE FOR CHANGE AND (B) THE PCI JUST HAS NO REAL
INTEREST IN DEVELOPING SUCH AN IMAGE AT THE PRESENT TIME. RATHER,
ITS GOAL IS TO CONVINCE THE ELECTORATE IN THE SHORT RUN THAT NO
ITALIAN GOVERNMENT, NATIONAL OR LOCAL, IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE

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DIRECT OR INDIRECT PARTICIPATION OF THE COMMUNISTS. IN THE TWO
DC STRONGHOLDS OF FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA AND THE VENETO AT LEAST THE
PCI SEEMS TO BE SUCCEEDING IN DOING JUST THAT, AIDED ENORMOUSLY BY
"NON SFIDUCIA" AND PROGRAMMATIC ACCORDS IN ROME. END OF SUMMARY.
2. 1975 PCI GAINS NOT UNMANAGEABLE. ON JUNE 15, 1975 THE PCI MADE
SOME SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN THE NORTHEAST BUT NOTHING REALLY UNMANA-
GEABLE FOR THE DC. IN THE VENETO, PSI/PCI ALLIANCES TOOK OVER THE
MANAGEMENT OF THE CITY OF VENICE AS WELL AS THE PROVINCIAL GOVERN-
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MENTS OF VENICE AND ROVIGO. THE PCI ALSO PENETRATED 15 OF TREVISO'S
92 COMMUNAL GOVERNMENTS WHICH UNTIL THEN HAD BEEN AN EXCLUSIVE DC
PRESERVE. IN ALL THESE CASES THE SLIM MAJORITIES WERE BALANCED BY
A STRONG DC OPPOSITION. MOREOVER, THE VENETO, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT
AND MAJOR VENETO CITIES, E.G. PADOVA AND TREVISO, REMAINED IN DC
HANDS.
3. IN FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA AFTER JUNE 15, THE DC WITH ITS SMALLER

LAY ALLIES BARELY COMMANDED A MAJORITY IN THE TRIESTE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL. THUS WHEN THESE SMALL PARTIES (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE MSI) STOOD ASIDE EARLIER THIS YEAR TO PUNISH THE DC FOR OSIMO, A PSI/PCI ALLIANCE TOOK OVER IN TRIESTE PROVINCE. HOWEVER TRIESTE MUNICIPAL AND FRIULI REGIONAL ELECTIONS ARE NOT DUE UNTIL LATE

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1977 AND 1978 RESPECTIVELY, AND THEREFORE THE DC REMAINS IN CHARGE HERE FOR THE TIME BEING.

4. ANTI-DC VOTE. HERE AS ELSEWHERE MUCH OF THE 1975 VOTE WAS AN ANTI-DC VOTE FOR THE PCI. IN DOING SO HOWEVER, THE ITALIAN VOTERS NEARLY DESTROYED THE SMALLER LAY PARTIES AND THESE SOMETIME DC ALLIES ARE INCREASINGLY MARGINAL TO THE GOVERNING MAJORITY AT BOTH THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS. YET, THEY ARE A KEY ELEMENT WHERE THE DC IS JUST SHY OF A MAJORITY. TAKING THEIR LEAD FROM ROME, THESE SMALLER PARTIES HOWEVER, REFUSE CENTER-LEFT ALLIANCES WITH THE DC AT THE LOCAL LEVELS, INSISTING ON SOME SORT OF PCI PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT AS A PRE-CONDITION TO THEIR SUPPORT.

5. TWO YEARS LATER. ON THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF JUNE 15, THE CITY OF VENICE REPORTEDLY NOW HAS A 37 BILLION LIRE DEFICIT INSTEAD OF THE 24 BILLION LEFT BEHIND BY THE DC. LA FENICE'S REPUTATION HAS SUFFERED AS A RESULT OF ITS POLITICAL ART.

6. ROVIGO IS JUST AS ECONOMICALLY DEPRESSED AS EVER AND THIS APRIL'S SPECIAL ELECTION LED TO ANOTHER POLITICAL STALEMATE IN THAT PROVINCE. A PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD NOW SEEMS TO BE IN THE CARDS, DESPITE ANDREOTTI'S CAMPAIGN PROMISE THAT "WHERE THE PCI'S IN POWER - THE DC IS IN OPPOSITION AND VICE VERSA" AND
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BISAGLIA'S STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST STANCE.

7. IN TRIESTE THAT CITY'S CITIZENS HAVE ALREADY PUNISHED THE DC AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL FOR OSIMO AND MORE OF THE SAME SEEMS TO BE IN THE CARDS FOR THE COMMUNAL ELECTIONS THIS FALL. HOWEVER, NO ONE REALLY SEEMS TO EXPECT THE PCI TO DO OVERNIGHT WHAT THE DC WAS UNABLE TO DO IN 30 YEARS. THE PCI THEREFORE CAN AND DOES FALL BACK ON THE EXCUSE OF ITS NARROW MARGIN AND CITES THE DC'S HOSTILE OPPOSITION ROLE AS THE OBSTACLE TO ITS BEST EFFORTS.

8. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF VENICE PROVINCE THE PCI PREFERS TO GIVE THE SOCIALISTS THE LEADING ROLE IN THEIR ALLIANCES, E.G., VENICE MAYORSHIP. THIS HAS SEVERAL ADVANTAGES: THE SOCIALISTS TAKE THE BRICKBATS FOR ANY FAILURES, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY THIS LOW-PCI PROFILE ACCUSTOMS THE ELECTORATE GRADUALLY TO A PCI GOVERNMENTAL ROLE.

9. WHERE THE DC IS NOMINALLY IN CONTROL, THE COMMUNISTS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CAPITALIZE LOCALLY ON THE ROME MODELS OF "NON SFIDUCIA" AND THE PROGRAMMATIC ACCORDS. THUS, THE DC HAS THE MAYORSHIP IN PADOVA SUPPORTED BY THE REPUBLICANS (PRI) AND THE PSDI WITH ALL PARTIES (MINUS THE MSI) VOTING FOR THE GOVERNMENT. THE NEW

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WRINKLE IS CALLED "THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY" IN WHICH EACH PARTY IS REPRESENTED TO COORDINATE COMMUNAL POLICY.

10. IN TREVISO, THE DC ALSO LEADS A TRIPARTITE COALITION WITH THE PRI AND PSDI BUT ALL PARTIES (MINUS THE MSI) SUPPORT THE DC MAYOR ON THE BASIS OF A PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD. AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL IN FRIULI, TWO SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES ON EARTH-QUAKE AND OSIMO MATTERS ENSURE A VETO FOR THE PCI ON REGIONAL POLICY.

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11. NOTWITHSTANDING ITS 48PCT OF THE VOTE AND WHAT THE VENICE DC PROVINCIAL SECRETARY CALLS THE DC'S HABIT OF POWER, HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO CONVINCE THE DC TO REMAIN IN THE OPPOSITION RATHER THAN AGREE TO PROGRAMMATIC ACCORDS ETC. IN VENICE PROVINCE. HE SAYS THE TACTIC IS PAYING OFF, SINCE THE SMALLER LAY PARTIES SEEM INCREASINGLY INTERESTED IN REVIVING THE OLD ALLIANCE WITH THE DC.

12. COMMENT: HERE AS IN ROME, THE PCI IS SKILLFULLY BLURING THE LINE BETWEEN OPPOSITION AND GOVERNMENT PARTIES. AS A RESULT, THE PCI HAS THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS, NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR GOVERNMENT BUT A VETO ON GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE. AS FOR THE DC, DESPITE ITS STRENGTH IN THE FRIULI AND VENETO, LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS CANNOT DO WHAT THE DC IS UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO DO IN

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ROME. IN THE MEANTIME, THE PCI CONTINUES TO BURNISH ITS IMAGE AS A STABLE AND RESPONSIBLE FACTOR IN THE GOVERNMENT EQUATION - - A ROLE WHICH CALLS FOR A PERCEPTION BY THE ELECTORATE OF A PCI AS A PARTNER WITH THE DC IN THE GOVERNING PROCESS AND NOT AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO IT. MOEN.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY STRENGTH, COMMUNISTS, POLITICAL SUMMARIES, PROGRESS REPORTS
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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 17-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TRIEST00158
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770176-0242
Format: TEL
From: TRIESTE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770546/aaaabodm.tel
Line Count: 160
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 06146e91-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 ROME 5784
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2479388
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE COMMUNISTS (PCI) IN THE NORTHEAST SINCE JUNE 1975
TAGS: PINT, IT, PCI
To: ROME
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/06146e91-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009